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VIII.—*Notes made on a Journey to the Source of the River Orontes in Syria, in September, 1834.* By W. Burckhardt Barker, Esq.  
—Communicated by Dr. Lee, LL.D.—*Read Feb. 15, 1836.*

[The following notes were extracted from a journal kept by Mr. W. B. Barker, during a journey through a considerable portion of Syria in 1835. The writer of them, whose father, J. Barker, Esq., many years consul at Aleppo and afterwards at Alexandria, is well known for his obligingness and hospitality to all travellers in the East, has the advantage of speaking and writing Arabic as his native language. His route led him from Beirút to Bátrún and Kanúbín, over Mount Lebanon to Ba'lbek, thence to the source of the Orontes; returning by 'Ain-neté\* to Tripoli, and thence along the coast as far as Suweidiyah, near the mouth of the Orontes,—a journey of about 400 miles. As the greater part of this route has been already described by Maundrell, Squire, Burckhardt, Irby and Mangles, La Martine, and other travellers, the extracts selected are chiefly those which give a description of the passage of Lebanon and the journey to the sources of the Orontes; no account of the latter, it is believed, having been published: these notes also acquire an additional interest at the present moment, since so large a part of the country to which they relate was desolated by the widely-felt earthquake by which Syria was visited in the beginning of the present year.]

August, 1835.—Left Beirút in the afternoon, with the intention of sleeping the first night at Nahr el Kelb, or Dog's River. The road, after crossing the Nahr el Šalíb, lies along the sea-shore to the northward till we come to a craggy promontory, on the northern side of which flows the stream; over the hill is a well-contrived ascent, which I should attribute to Roman, if not to a more ancient construction; on the left, and close to the water's edge, are the remains of what appear to have been bathis. On the top of the hill on the right, and overhead in a conspicuous position, are three inscriptions, which have been lately copied in plaster by Signor Bonomi.†

The situation here is very picturesque; two precipitous rocks form a ravine, through which flows the Nahr el Kelb, under a curiously-contrived bridge, which is only made use of during the winter inundations.

Two hours' slow walking brought me to Júní, situated behind a promontory similar to that of Nahr el Kelb, but smaller, in a pretty valley open to the sea, and on a sandy beach where boats bring wheat, barley, and dhurrah,‡ for sale, and pay to Mohammed 'Alí a duty of five piastres per ardeb.§ This place furnishes silk,

\* 'Ain-net-e (آين نة), 'the forth-coming spring.'

† See Signor Bonomi's account of these inscriptions, just published in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature.

‡ Sorghum vulgare, the Juwár of Hindústán.—F. S.

§ The Ardeb in Cairo is about three bushels of our measure, and one piastre equal to about 3*d.* sterling.—Ed.

which this year has failed, on account perhaps of the disordered state of the people, who were all dispersed in great fear of being pressed into the army, and could not pay sufficient attention to their plantations. I slept this evening in the coffee-house of an Armenian, a fine hearty old man of more than eighty years of age, who had been established here for the last forty years, and had learnt Arabic remarkably well. He still, however, preferred Turkish, and was quite delighted to find that I could converse with him in that language. He doubled his attentions, and spent part of the night recounting his adventures. He had two Armenian Bibles in his possession. He was much grieved at the loss of the best of his sons, a young man of twenty-three, but appeared resigned to the will of Providence.

A little beyond Júní is another promontory that projects into the sea in the same way as the two last-mentioned, and over it the road has been cut. On the left stands an old tower or light-house, which may perhaps be cited in proof of a story told in this country, but for which I cannot vouch,—that the Empress Helena, when the cross had been found, ordered light-houses or beacons to be built from Jerusalem to Constantinople, which on the day of the opening of the tomb of our Saviour she caused to be lighted, and thus conveyed the news to her capital by a sort of telegraph; and they show to this day a similar tower strongly built at Rás Beïrút, at about twenty minutes' walk from the town.

Half way to Jubéil\* is the beautiful little river Nahr Ibráhím, over which is a high bridge. A little further on I was overtaken by two Druse † ladies, who were going to see their friends near Jubéil; their dress, which was rich, and covered with a white veil that concealed the whole person, was kept over their heads by a sort of silver horn. The agility of these women is astonishing: they appear not in the least encumbered by their robes, mounting and descending from their donkeys without any assistance. When riding they put off their slippers for fear of dropping them by the way.

Beyond Jubéil by the coast there is a sponge fishery, whence a great number of sponges of a fine quality are collected every year by some Greek sailors, who come from Syria, and are generally under French protection.

There is a similar fishery to the south of Beïrút, between it and Saïdá or Sidon. Bátrún has had a pretty good harbour, but it is now filled up with mud and sand, and only small boats can

\* The Little Mountain, the first vowel is very rapidly and indistinctly uttered, hence Burckhardt spells it Djebail (Syria, p. 179).—F. S.

† Properly Derzé for Durúz, commonly written Druse, is the plural.—F. S.

enter. From Bâtrûn I left the coast for the interior of the country.

At one hour from Bâtrûn, after a pretty ride along the valley, we reach the Castle of Maşēilīḥah, probably Turkish. It stands on a rock, and is about 100 feet high.

On the way to Kanúbín, before one ascends the mountain which leads to Tirzah and thence to Ḥaddad and Bīdemán (where the Maronite patriarch resides in summer), in the plain, at half an hour's distance from the road, stands the old church of Beizah; it has four Ionic columns, of which three are standing. The ascent before reaching Tirzah is tedious, but the road pretty good. I slept here under the wall of a Maronite church, and heard the psalmody of the villagers.

The next morning I arrived in two hours at Ḥaddad, after passing a very bad road up a steep ascent.

I was here delighted with the manners of the superior, who, though not an old man, has really a venerable patriarchal appearance; his conduct towards everybody is marked by that humility which governs by the sceptre of love: this he sways with great power and honour, and does credit to the confidence necessarily placed in him. He is absolute master; no prince can reign more effectually over his people. He has private property, which renders him independent of his flock. The patriarch was residing in a country house at Bīdemán, about two hours from Ḥaddad, and on the top of the mountain. His see is at Kanúbín. The monks here are jealous of their library, and on my asking what books they had, I was answered "none." I obtained, however, permission to see them all, and looked them over one by one; they consist chiefly of books of devotion, many in Latin. They have a printed work in Arabic on Trigonometry, and three books of which I took a note,\* but which must be known in Europe. The rest were prayer-books and theological discussions in Syriac and Arabic. There were no Coptic or Cufic manuscripts.

On the road from Bīdemán to Bisherrá (the village nearest to where the cedars are of the greatest size) is the most delightful scenery imaginable; nothing to equal or surpass it out of Europe. You may easily fancy yourself in a fairy land; every thing seems to grow spontaneously. No peasants are seen at work; they have nothing to do but to sow and reap, and the abundance of water that flows on every side saves them the trouble of irrigating. I never had a pleasanter ride. The poplar, the dark-green walnut-trees, and the weeping willows, form a beautiful contrast

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\* 1. The discourses of Lokmán the Sage. 2. A Poem by Filībús Fodúl 3. The Tale of King Kál'ád and his Vezír.

with the barren rocks that hang in huge precipices over you, while you pass through a fertile land, refreshed by water-falls in all directions; and the distant view of the cedars on the bare rock, at the foot of a snow-capped mountain, enchants the traveller and raises his expectation of the far-famed forests of Solomon. The quiet appearance of this remote quarter seems to denote the hand of Providence majestically pointing out this place as fit for the retreat of religion in an oppressed land.

Having slept at Bisherrá, I proceeded the next day to visit the cedars. There are many places in the mountain where this tree grows, but in the spot usually shown there are about 600 together.\* Before it reaches them, the road takes a turn to the right, and passes along a cliff, the rock of which is so smooth in a slanting direction, that I was tempted to believe it had been artificially formed, in order to slide to Bisherrá the immense blocks of wood used for the building of the Temple, and was more encouraged in this opinion by an examination of the road to Bisherrá, which would not easily allow of such vast pieces passing over it; whereas they might have been launched down this slanting rock to the foot of the hill, and carried thence to Bīdemán by way of Haṣrún.

I was disappointed by the cedars, although I saw all that I could have expected. From the cedars mounting the adjoining rock, I reached, in an hour and a half, the place where snow is lying all the year round, and descending on the other side, found myself, after six hours' ride, at Deir el Ahmar.† After passing through 'Ainnete,‡ whither the inhabitants of Bisherra go for wheat and barley, the road to Deir el Ahmar is between hills which gradually decrease in height, and are the natural continuation of Mount Lebanon. At this place begins the plain, at the further end of which, and at the foot of the Anti Libanus, stands Ba'lbek or Baa'leth, mentioned in Scripture as having been built by Solomon.§ The old foundations to the north-west of the Temple consist of such stupendous stones from 30 to 67 feet in length, as could not easily be removed, and although much in the way, three of the largest, measuring 63, 64, and 67 feet

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\* Of course the author must include in this number the young trees as well as the old patriarchs of the forest, as we learn from Bellonius, who visited them in the middle of the sixteenth century, that only 28 of these large trees were standing. Father Dandini, in 1600, counted 23; Thevenot, in 1657, found 22; Maundrell, in 1696, only 16; Pococke, in 1737, counted 15; Burckhardt, in 1810, reckoned 12; Dr. Richardson, in 1818, found them reduced to 7; and M. de La Martine, in 1832, speaks of 7 still remaining, but the snow prevented his reaching them.—Ed.

The whole number amount to about 400, according to Burckhardt (Syria, p. 19).—F. S.

† The Red Convent, erroneously spelt Akhmar by Burckhardt, p. 17.

‡ Spelt Ainete (perhaps 'Ain aṭá, i. e. gift-spring) by Mr. Barker.

§ 2 Chronicles, chap. viii. 6.

respectively, still form a part of the wall. These, from the appearance of the stone, are evidently of a more ancient date than the rest, and tend to confirm the tradition that ascribes them to the time of Solomon; but these ruins have been too often measured and described for me to add anything further.

From Ba'lbek I started for the source of the Orontes, a place little known, and visited by few, if any, European travellers, from the danger said to attend it. The Metawáls, a tribe which is in possession of these parts, are known for their hatred of all sects that differ from them in point of religion; but by passing myself off for an officer of Ibráhím Páshá, I procured a guide with whom I ventured to trust myself in the forest that night, in spite of the notorious character of his tribe.

At an hour's ride from Ba'lbek, before one reaches the first descent and on the left of the road, I saw a perfect sarcophagus and two broken ones, which had all been opened. This place might have been a burying-ground of the ancients, and some excavations would probably throw light on the subject. Through the valley runs a little stream, by the aid of which we made an excellent breakfast on bread, cheese, and cucumbers. Ascending on the other side, I proceeded in an E.N.E. direction along the foot of Anti-Libanus nearly on a plain till twelve o'clock, when I came to a village called Labweh, after having passed an encampment of Turkománs to the right of the road, at a place called Shaad. Labweh is at the foot of the range of Anti-Libanus on the top of a hillock, near which passes a small stream which has its source in the adjoining mountains, and after flowing for several hours through the plain, falls into the basin from which springs the Orontes.

At six hours east of Labweh I reached Fikhí, a village beautifully situated in a small valley, on a parallel nearly with the plain, and at the foot of the said range of the Anti-Libanus.

I here procured another Metawáli guide, and proceeded with him first to Ar-Ras\* or "the head," being a village at the extremity of the range. Here a few Christians are suffered to dwell separately from the other inhabitants, that they may do the manual work necessary in the cultivation of such parts of the plain as are within reach of the river of Labweh.

Traversing the plain in a north-east direction for three hours, I regained the river of Labweh, along the banks of which two hours' ride brought me towards evening to the source of the Orontes, called by the people El 'A'sí† or "the rebel," from its occasional violence and windings, during a course of about 200 miles in a

\* Abú-l-fedá (Syria, p. 150).

† 'From its *refusing* to water the fields without being compelled by means of watering-wheels,' says Abú-l-fedá (Syria, p. 149).—F. S.

northerly direction, passing through Homş and Hamáh, and finally discharging itself into the sea at Suweïdíah near Antioch. The source here springs with some violence from a natural basin in the rock, of a triangular form, measuring about fifty paces, and nearly concealed on each side by trees and bushes, of which chestnut, willow, and a dwarf oak, are the most common.

The Labweh flows along the base of this triangle in a north-east direction, and mingles its little current with the stream from the spring which here runs at a considerable rate. The three barren perpendicular rocks which enclose this little spot form a striking contrast with the verdure that grows, as it were, upon the water beneath. On the south side of the basin, at the top of the rock, there is an excavation of several rooms, said to have been the hermitage of Márón the first Maronite; two rooms are of easy access, but the others can only be climbed up to with difficulty.

Having made a sketch of this rarely-visited and secluded spot, I quitted it, and took the direction of Bisherrá by another road, which, towards Marzehím, led over the low chain of hills I have already mentioned, as a natural continuation of Libanus; these hills were covered with brushwood, and with bellút, a species of oak,\* almond-trees, buckthorn, wild thyme in abundance, and other aromatic herbs.

Marzehím is situated near a beautiful fertile plain, through which runs a fordable rivulet. I did not go up to the village, which would have taken me out of the way, but proceeded alone, and unfortunately, after much fatigue in ascending Mount Libanus, lost all traces of the road, so that instead of passing to the right which would have taken me to Bisherrá, I had to descend a precipice where the foot of man could scarce find a level space to rest upon, and such as even few quadrupeds would venture to descend.

Towards evening I reached the bottom and slept at an encampment of Arabs, where I was hospitably treated; and the following morning I returned by 'Ainnete to Bisherrá, having again missed my way.

From Bisherrá I took the road to Tripoli, which, after the first two hours, continues nearly on a level. From Tripoli I continued by the route along the coast passing through Tortosa, Markab, and Latakia,† and crossing the Orontes, reached Suweïdíah on the 22nd of August.

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Annexed is a brief account of the late dreadful earthquake in Syria, extracted from the letters of Mr. Moore, British Consul

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\* *Quercus Ballota*,—F. S.

† Properly *El Ládhiqíyah*,—F. S.

at Beirút, to his Majesty's Government, and from other authentic sources.

January 1, 1837.—At 4 h. 35 m. P.M. the first shock of the earthquake was felt in the city of Beirút. It was accompanied by a rumbling noise, and lasted ten seconds, and appeared to proceed from the north. No buildings were thrown down in the town; but without the walls seven or eight houses, built on a sandy foundation, fell, and one or two lives were lost. The course of the river Ontílias\* (?) near Beirút was suspended, and the mills on its banks were deprived of water for some hours. When the stream returned to its bed the waters were turbid, and of a reddish, sandy colour. The atmosphere during the day of the earthquake was close, and charged with electricity. Fahrenheit's thermometer stood at 66°, but rose to 70° five minutes after the earthquake; for four or five minutes after the shock the compass was still agitated. The weather had been unusually mild and fine during the last few weeks. The oldest inhabitants of Beirút do not remember so severe an earthquake.

At Damascus, four minarets and several houses were thrown down, the bázárs damaged, and eight or ten individuals killed or wounded.

The cities of Tyre and Sidon were greatly injured.

At Acrida, part of the fortifications were overthrown, and several persons killed or maimed.

Tiberias is entirely destroyed; nothing but the baths remaining. The lake rose and swept away many of the inhabitants.

The town of Safet† is a heap of ruins, and nearly the whole of its inhabitants have perished; not more than seven, or by some accounts, not more than five in the hundred, of the population survive; and their sufferings, augmented by exposure to the piercing air of the mountains, without food, shelter, or medical advice, have been very severe. To add to the horrors of their condition, numerous packs of dogs, attracted to the spot by the carcases on which they prey, were rendered thereby so furious, as to be dangerous to the living. The Bedowins also hovered about the ruins for plunder.

Safet is one of the five holy cities whither the Jews resort from all parts of Christendom in old age to die and be interred, and 1500 are now buried in the ruins. Up to the 21st of January shocks of the earthquake continued to be felt daily, and the ground all around was rent into fearful chasms. The amount of

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\* The river of Beirút is called Nahr-es-salib. *Ontílias* is probably an error of transcription: perhaps it should be Wád Iliyás, the river of Elias, as St. George, called by the Arabs Khidr Iliyás, is supposed to have suffered martyrdom near Beirút (D'Arvieux, *Mémoires*, ii. 376).—F. S.

† Or Safed, Abú-l-fedá (Syria, p. 43, 82).—F. S.

the population is uncertain, but supposed to have been from 6000 to 7000.

The great shock appears to have been simultaneous, and was most sensibly felt to the southward, having extended 500 miles in length by 90 in breadth. It was felt in the island of Cyprus. Forty villages have been totally, and eleven partially destroyed. It were useless to enumerate them here, as the greater part do not appear on any map of Syria yet published. The number of lives lost is stated at about 6000, but it is much to be feared, that in reality they greatly exceed that number.

IX.—*Narrative of a Journey into the Interior of Omán*, in 1835. By Lieutenant Wellsted, Indian Navy. Communicated by Sir John Barrow, Bart. Read April 10, 1837.

IN the course of my employment on the survey of the southern and western coasts of Arabia, my attention was constantly directed towards the state of the contiguous provinces, and with this view I undertook several short journeys into the interior; but no opportunity of penetrating, to any considerable distance, occurred until the commencement of the year 1835, when Mohammed Ali dispatched a force from Egypt, in order to take possession of the Coffee country. My proposal to accompany his army in that expedition, for the purpose of endeavouring from thence to reach Hadramaút, was immediately acceded to by the Indian government; but before their sanction could be conveyed to me, intelligence arrived of the Pashá's force having been led into a defile, in the Assair country, and there defeated with great slaughter; a miserable remnant alone reaching the sea-shore.

Foiled, therefore, in this quarter, I determined, on my return to Bombay, to turn my attention towards 'Omán, a territory almost as little known as any part of Arabia.

After obtaining the necessary permission, I embarked on board a small schooner (the *Cysene*) for Maskat,\* at which port, after a pleasant passage, we arrived on the 21st of November.

I found Sayyid S'aíd, the Imám of Maskat or sovereign of 'Omán, ready, with his characteristic liberality, in every way to forward my views. Letters were prepared under his own direction to the chiefs of the different districts through which I had to pass, and on November 25th, I quitted that port to proceed to Súr.

Maskat was known to some of the ancient geographers,† as it is probably the Moscha, a port of the Hadramitæ mentioned

\* Also spelt with the common k and t; but k and t are probably requisite.—F. S.

† *Geographa*, Lib. vii. cap. 6, p. 153.